

5. ELECTRONIC RECORD RETENTION/ARCHIVING

With the proliferation of electronic records, and with few rules governing the purchase and use of imaging systems, it is vitally important that state agencies have the means to archive records from a variety of electronic sources. Using COM, electronic records can be moved from diverse, incompatible electronic storage systems to a “universal” reader.

Virtually all agencies require the sanction of an official retention schedule prior to the destruction of public records. Indiana Code 5-15-5.1-14 states:

A public official or agency may not mutilate, destroy, sell, loan, or otherwise dispose of any government record, except under a record retention schedule or with the written consent of the [Indiana Archives and Records Administration].

COM provides a sophisticated electronic records management tool that ensures proper retention of archival records, by decreasing any unauthorized destruction of records and increasing public access.

FINAL NOTE

The rapid growth of PC-based computer systems throughout state government presents new and complicated challenges for the Archives and Records Administration, whose mission (established by IC 5-15-5.1) is to retain and preserve the state's most valuable records. At present national standards state that only two storage media can be considered for permanently preserving written history: paper and microforms. Of the two media, computer generated microfilm is the more rapid and efficient for capturing important records created in an electronic format.

COM

(Computer Output Microfilm)

*An Electronic Record
Cost-Saving Option*

Indiana Archives and Records Administration

For further information contact:

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WHAT IS COM ?

The acronym *COM*, meaning *computer output microfilm*, is a process for copying and printing data onto microfilm from electronic media.

COM consists of 1) a high-speed recorder that transfers digital data onto microfilm using laser technology, and 2) a processor that develops the microfilm once exposed to a light source. A COM recorder can operate “on-line” or “off-line,” meaning that it can be connected to a single computer, a local- or wide-area network, a minicomputer, or a mainframe computer. In addition, the recorder can operate independently as a stand-alone device that reads digital data from formatted magnetic media, such as tape. A COM recorder generally operates with 1) a duplicator that generates copies of microfiche, and 2) a sorter that separates duplicate microfiche cards into bins for easy, end-point distribution. Each functional unit is connected to the next, providing a linear path from creation to end-point distribution of the microfiche.

COM TO CD SERVICE

The State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory can also arrange for Compact Disc transfer service. Data that has been transferred to COM for retention purposes can be transferred to CD-ROM for ease of access and very high storage capability.

The cost of this service varies based on the number of frames recorded to CD. If you would like to take advantage of this option, contact the State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory for pricing information.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COM ?

COM offers many advantages that assist agencies with efficient office operations and sound records management. Key benefits include:

1. REDUCTION OF PAPER

One of the primary objectives of providing COM is to decrease paper use as allowed by P.L. 40 (1979), Section 16, which authorizes recording, copying, and reproducing records by photostatic, photographic, or micrographic process to reduce storage space. A one-cubic-foot box of paper records holds an average of only 3,000 pages. One microfiche card holds 230 documents (or images), and a one-cubic-foot records storage box holds 6,000 microfiche cards—a minimum of 1,380,000 pages. To store that many paper documents, 460 one-cubic-foot records storage boxes would be needed!

2. COST REDUCTION

Using COM to store or distribute information is more economical than most electronic media, and is even less expensive than paper. The cost of printing a standard 8”x11” page from a centralized printer is approximately three cents per sheet, versus only 0.0033 cents per sheet for COM microfiche. Other cost savings can be realized through the decrease in office and warehouse space needed to store paper documents.

3. IMPROVED QUALITY

The newest COM technology provides superior image quality for improved user productivity. Such features as enhanced titling, enlarged file breaks, and bar coding make access and filing easier. Improved quality also means reader and printer copies that are legible.

4. IMPROVED SERVICE

The use of COM services outsourced by the State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory helps reduce the risk of lost tapes and slow turn-around times from individually-contracted vendors, thereby offering agencies quick access to high-quality microfilm images. Initial transfer of information from the agency to the lab is also simple and quick: database (ASCII or EBCDIC) or image (tiff group 4) files may be sent directly from your agency's computers to the State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory ftp site for transfer to fiche. Contact the lab for specific file-type requirements and ftp address.